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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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*Vietnam: [General Thi's efforts to make himself South Vietnam's new strong man are causing alarm in some military circles]

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[In another recent development, a group calling itself the "Struggle for Peace Force" has been formed by some politicians in Saigon. Its goals reportedly are a ceasefire and an international conference on Vietnam. Police, who suspect that the group may have ties with the Buddhist Institute, prevented it from holding a news conference two days ago. A peaceful demonstration in Saigon yesterday by about 100 students calling for an end to the war may have been sponsored by the new organization, however. A four-point manifesto with

similar goals and signed by a prominent second-ranking member of the Buddhist Institute was issued today in Saigon.]

[No significant new Viet Cong military actions have been reported, but there are continuing signs of erosion of government control in the northern provinces. Officials in Quang Nam Province are reported to be discouraged over their inability to defend "secure" hamlets against superior Viet Cong forces. One district chief claims that, since the end of the Tet ceasefire three weeks ago, he has lost control over 16 villages. In northwest Kostum Province about 1,000 tribesmen and a company of regional forces were moved early this month into a town from the surrounding countryside, and plans are being made to abandon the entire district to the Viet Cong if the situation deteriorates further.]

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*USSR: Premier Kosygin's 26 February report on his Asian mission illustrated current Soviet efforts to inhibit further US actions against North Vietnam, to assert leadership in rallying a unified Communist front against US "aggression," and, at the same time, to lend cautious support to advocates of a negotiated settlement.

Kosygin reaffirmed the Soviet pledge of "necessary assistance" to North Vietnam and announced that the Soviet-DRV agreement on measures to "safeguard the security and strengthen the defense potential" of North Vietnam is being implemented. He sought to exploit concern over the possibility of a major military escalation by warning that if US "aggressive actions" continue, the Vietnam conflict "will eventually transcend its original boundaries." Kosygin, however, avoided any implication that Soviet forces might become involved in such a contingency.

The Soviet premier also sharpened previous warnings about the adverse effects that US policy in Vietnam may have on Soviet-American relations. He denounced alleged US violation of international law and the UN Charter and cautioned against a "slippery road which may have far-reaching consequences."

Kosygin's guarded comments on the possibility of negotiations were designed, on the one hand, to avoid an open divergence with Hanoi and Peiping, and, on the other, to stimulate further initiatives by foreign governments toward negotiations. Although Kosygin refrained from committing the USSR to any specific proposal, he voiced the desire of "peace-loving countries" for an Indochina solution "at a conference table."

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In line with earlier private Soviet statements, he set forth only one precondition--that the US "aggressive actions" against North Vietnam be ended in order to "create conditions for the exploration of avenues leading to the normalization of the situation in Indochina."

Kosygin repeated standard demands for the withdrawal of US forces from both South Vietnam and South Korea, but he did not pose this as a precondition to negotiations.

He also used this occasion to restate the earlier Soviet concept of a political settlement in South Vietnam. He contended that South Vietnamese of "different political convictions" are united in "seeking to end foreign intervention, to create in South Vietnam a national coalition government that would follow a policy of independence, democracy, peace, and neutrality." This formula, which conveys Soviet interest in a settlement on the Laotian pattern, probably is intended as a cautious endorsement of French views.

In respect to the Sino-Soviet conflict, Kosygin tried to convey an impression of a high degree of unity among the USSR, North Vietnam, and North Korea. He claimed that the "most important result" of his visits to Hanoi and Pyongyang was a common determination to defend and strengthen the cohesion of the socialist camp. Kosygin's treatment of his talks in Peiping seemed contrived to suggest that the Chinese leaders had refused to join this common front against imperialism.

In contrast to the claims regarding favorable prospects for strengthening Soviet friendship and cooperation with North Vietnam and North Korea, Kosygin remarked only that his conversations with the Chinese

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were useful in helping to clarify the "possibilities of further developing our relations." He added, however, that "difficulties and differences" cannot be resolved right away and again attributed the Sino-Soviet cleavage to differences in the "historical development" of the two countries--a view long and vigorously rejected by the Chinese. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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* Because of the shortage of time for preparation of this item, the analytic interpretation presented here has been produced by the Central Intelligence Agency without the participation of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State.

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NOTES

USSR: The commander of the Warsaw Pact forces, Soviet Marshal Grechko, has been identified as commander of the Soviet ground forces as well. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] this dual assignment was made to simplify the chain of command within the pact organization where Soviet ground forces have the major role. Marshal Sudets, commander of the Soviet air defense forces, is reported also to head the Warsaw Pact air defense forces. These new assignments, which may have been made last July when other organizational changes were made in the Soviet military establishment, suggest that an effort has been under way to tighten integration of Soviet and satellite forces. [REDACTED]

*Netherlands: The fall of the governing coalition on 26 February in a dispute over a domestic issue--radio and television advertising--rather than a foreign policy question reflects the Dutch political pattern of recent years. Negotiations over a new cabinet may be protracted. The Catholic Party of Prime Minister Marijnen and Foreign Minister Luns, the largest of the 10 parties in parliament, will be one of the most likely contenders for a leading place in any new coalition.

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25X1 South Korea: [President Pak intends to shift top
army commanders in the near future instead of in
June when such changes normally would take place,
[redacted] Pak may want to
have new commanders in place in order to cope with
unrest generated by the opposition's current cam-
paign against a settlement of Korea's long-standing
differences with Japan. Pak has said he would im-
pose martial law, if necessary, while an agreement
with Tokyo is reached.] [redacted]

25X1 [redacted]

25X1 Congo: New strains are evident within the Leo-
poldville regime. President Kasavubu and General
Mobutu apparently are alarmed by reports of Tshombé's
free-wheeling attempts to solidify his position, and
fear that Tshombé is aiming at becoming president
after the upcoming elections. Some influential poli-
ticians, formerly associated with ex-Premier Adoula,
are trying hard to play on Kasavubu's anxieties, but
it seems likely that at least for the time being he and
Tshombé will continue to recognize that they need
one another. [redacted]

25X1 [redacted]

25X1 UK - West Germany: [British efforts to show prog-
ress toward forming an Allied Nuclear Force (ANF)
are getting a cautious reception in Bonn. The West
Germans have turned down--at least until sometime
after the Erhard-Wilson meeting early next month--
a British suggestion that the two countries announce
their joint sponsorship of multilateral discussions
of the ANF project. The British Foreign Office is
still claiming that the UK is determined to press
ahead on the ANF.] [redacted]

25X1 [redacted]

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